



Week 2 Assignment, Part 3: List of School Improvement Recommendations

Overview

The purpose of the Part 3 Assignment is to complete and submit the list of school improvement recommendations to demonstrate knowledge of school operations, culture, and areas needing change.

Learning Outcome

Candidates will:

- Analyze and evaluate your overall intern experience noting observations of the school operations and culture and decide on changes that should be made for school improvement.

Performance Outcome

Candidates will be able to:

- Write a list of recommended actions for needed school improvement.

Assignment Due Date: Discussion Postings are due on the fourth day and all other Week 2 assignments are due by 11:59 p.m. on the seventh day of Week 2.

Rubric: Week 2, Part 3

Use the following Rubric to guide your work on the Week 2 Assignments.

EDLD 5398 Week 2 Tasks	Accomplished/ Exceeds Standards	Proficient/ Meets Standards	Needs Improvement/ Approaches Standards	Unacceptable/ Does Not Meet Standards
Part 3 School Improvement Recommendations List	Candidate completes and submits the List of Recommended Actions for School Improvement (30 points)			Candidate completes and submits the List of Recommended Actions for School Improvement (0 points)

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Due Week 2

Directions:

1. Reflect on your overall internship experience and note thoughts you had where you felt policies or practices were in need of change or improvement. Begin drafting a list of 5-10 school improvement constructive recommendations that you might make to your building administrator to improve the school. The final list will be due at the end of Week 2. You will also post your list in the Week 3 Discussions. For the Week 3 discussion, you may want to remove any identifying names, if applicable.
2. Upload the document into the course.
3. Then load the document to Tk20 in the course binder. Data from student work in the internship is required by the State and accreditation agencies. Tk20 is the system Lamar University and many other universities use for this purpose. Keep in mind that all work stored in Tk20 is available for each student to use if you want to create a personal, professional electronic portfolio.

Reflection:

Over the last month, I have reviewed a few of my previous course lessons and most of my course reflections in an effort to provide the reflections for the internship validation document. It was a valuable process and reminded me that during the process, and in the moment, the mastery of the issues being studied were and will be critically important for future successful technology and campus leaders, i.e. principals to master, especially those that have not had nineteen years of on-the-job training.

I take for granted the skills required to disaggregate data and apply it to campus, district, and technology improvement plans and tie that information to budgets because I have been doing it since the requirements for these improvement documents became law in 1994, but the coursework reminded me of the stress I felt during the initial training to create the district's first improvement plans. The coursework also taught me that these documents are required and intended to be frequently referenced, edited, updated, and improved throughout the course of the year by a team, the site based decision management team to be exact, not just by one or two people and, not just shelved until it is time for the refresh process each year.

I learned to use new cloud based technology tools to accomplish tasks previously only attempted with local software and with local teachers, to complete a public service announcement, design not one, but two different web sites, design and provide tools for differentiated instruction to students with a variety of skill levels and disabilities, even for blind students. Those courses were stressful. Dealing with people at great distances was challenging; but, when I review the end products, a Public Service Announcement, video productions, online posted power points, web sites, online accessible documents, a blog, a wiki, etc., I realize our results were pretty amazing! The "cloud" enabled us to electronically and instantly share the work load. This in turn made it possible to accomplish a great deal in a relatively short amount of "together" time. Cloud based tools really do seem to be valuable educational tools and I myself am considering moving some of our local resource applications to the "cloud", but I am still concerned about the security of the data and people's work once it is in the "cloud". For instance, I really like DropBox, and had even started the process of getting administrators and teachers acquainted with it via sharing pictures of the seniors during graduation activities last year. As school started, I got a notice that it had been

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hacked and network administrators needed to take steps to mitigate the risks it posed by removing it from network computers....That is a tremendous hurdle! Shared data, whether its pictures, identifying data, or research has to be secure. Conscientious network administrators cannot just overlook the security of data when they consider moving applications to the "cloud." It is the network administrator's job to protect that data. I am not sure it makes a difference whether its a local resource that gets hacked or an external site over which they have no control, but the issues and risks need to be carefully weighed and fully discussed with all stakeholders before the decision is made to move everything to the cloud. The issue of the "cloud" and "cloud based applications" is an area with tremendous promise, when internet access resources exist to fluidly utilize it, but it is one that will require monitoring and research before I can whole heartedly recommend it.

School law and the development of intervention plans for struggling students are areas in which I had very little, if any previous experience. I found the course on School Law which utilized case studies to teach us about the laws and how they are applied in the case of disputes to be very interesting, in fact something I would really like to study more. The development of the intervention plan for the special needs student gave me a new perspective of the intervention and ARD process. Just as studying the application of disciplinary actions within legally permissible limits taught me what is/is not permissible when it comes to disciplinary actions. It is an area that also needs further study.

I cannot leave out the benefits of reflection and action research to the overall process of personal, classroom, and school improvement. In some ways, and at some points over the last eighteen months, the reflection requirements seemed to be extreme with so many stacked on top of each other, that the beneficial elements of the process were lost. Yet, as I tried to prepare the validation report, by going through all of my previous course reflections to locate the ones relevant to the parts of the internship document being referenced, I realized that the process, even though it was tough to do, did have meaning...I was being forced to revisit past learning and in the process I was reviewing for the TeXes exam and for this reflective process. This process is also necessary in order to give the process of looking forward direction. School improvement has to be well thought out, and research based. The only way for that to occur is through active ongoing personal and group research into solutions for stated and implied local problems. We have to know what has worked in other districts in similar situations, we have to conduct and sponsor action research within our own learning communities to prevent stagnation. In order to lead important classroom, campus, district, state, and national school reform efforts, individuals and teams of individuals have to know where they have been in addition to where they want to go. They have to understand the circumstances that created current problems they are attempting to address and have some idea of how to get past those problems. Reflection individually and in groups provides the opportunities to think about the situation, while action research provides information for developing mitigation tactics, goals, and best practices to model to attain those goals.

In light of what I have learned over the last eighteen months and the district's improved financial status as the result of oil related income, I would propose these improvements for our school district:

- 1) Increase the length of the school day by fifty minutes:
This will decrease child care bills for parents by 5 hours a week;
Allow the time for the inclusion of additional electives in both elementary and high school;
- 2) Hire additional staff- it is ludicrous and should be illegal to expect a people who already work 12 – 14 hour days to take on additional teaching duties:
 - A) Hire at least one teacher on each campus whose task it is to teach technology applications courses with the correct TEKS for each grade level and course;

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- B) Hire at least one STEM certified mathematics/science teacher to introduce these critical subjects with hands-on experiential learning methods unique to STEM courses;
- 3) Offer and teach technology applications, additional career and technology, and STEM courses;
- 4) Allow juniors and seniors to expand beyond our traditional dual credit offerings within the Texas Virtual School Network to take additional coursework. Continue to allow the period and room for their online work, but also allow them to take courses strictly online, on their own time and during the summer. Inform them that scholarships may be lost if they accumulate enough hours to be considered a college sophomore, but let them make the choice.
- 5) Do not limit input concerning major school building or other improvements to a select influential few, but instead, enlist the full support of the entire community in the effort to determine the best next steps for designing and building a new school and/or new sports complex. We have many new families from a variety of backgrounds, let's get them involved and in so doing, make them a true part of our community.
 - A) This means ongoing monthly public meetings, i.e. site based decision committee and general public meetings to get the public involved in the processes;
 - B) This means allowing more than 30 minutes for public meetings and hearings;
 - C) This also means monthly campus and teacher meetings to enlist teacher support and input so improvement will not be "done to them", but with their help!
- 6) The adoption of the State Technology Plan by the governor and/or by TEA has been used as the measure of successful technology instruction and infrastructure attainment for over ten years. In using this document as a measuring stick of skills, instruction, and infrastructure, the State has indicated that developing the infrastructure, skills, instruction, and instructional methods depicted within the document are not optional activities, but expected and necessary in order for schools to fulfill their mission to properly educate their students for successful careers in today's world. Yet, the funding to create these "perfect" classrooms is available only to a few wealthy school districts or to poor districts with high free and reduced lunch counts via grants each year. Even the technology allotment was effectively taken away in the last biennium.

The granting process flies directly in the face of the law that states each student is entitled to a free and equal public education. By providing wonderful resources to a few schools and NO additional resources to others the state is not meeting the "equal" requirement of the law and, in fact is discriminating against high performing school districts who do not have elevated free and reduced lunch counts nor the property base to generate the revenue required to pay for school improvements aligned with the new State curriculum, or with the State technology plan, which incidentally means they cannot implement or deploy the infrastructure necessary to support state mandated online testing.

In short...the funding formula for school districts needs to be revised and, in my opinion, the granting process needs to be halted with the money evenly distributed among all school districts in the state.